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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID/OTI(RPORTER)  
HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2018

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SUBJECT: GENERAL BADUEL ARRESTED

Classified By: Francisco Fernandez, Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (SBU) Agents of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DIM), on October 3 unceremoniously pulled former Defense Minister General Raul Baduel off of the city streets of Maracay. General Ernesto Cedeno of the Judge Advocate General told the press that Baduel had to account for 31 billion BsF (USD 14.4 billion equivalent) and that DIM was merely executing a "transfer order" to a military courtroom approximately two hours away in Caracas. According to Baduel's lawyer, Rafael Tosta, the retired general was charged with misappropriation of funds and released with the prohibition of leaving the country, refraining from speaking to the media, and the requirement to appear before a military court every 15 days. Following his release later the same day, Baduel said he was prepared to "clear everything up," adding that the rough and public manner of his arrest wouldn't divert attention from the suitcase trial in Miami.

¶2. (SBU) A broad spectrum of opposition groups and opinion-makers quickly criticized Baduel's arrest. Monsignor Baltazar Porras, the Archbishop of Merida, called Baduel's rough arrest "at the edge of human rights." PODEMOS party leader Ismael Garcia indicated Baduel's arrest a "another provocation," and claimed the BRV, fearing a big loss in the November elections, "want to intimidate the population." Opposition cable news station Globovision played a video of Baduel's arrest in heavy rotation.

¶3. (C) According to retired VADM Mario Ivan Carratu Molina (Protect), it was not secret that Baduel, like previous Army commanders had enriched himself. Carratu claimed that Baduel had ignored several earlier summons to appear before a military court. According to Carratu, the arrest is political because Baduel knows about too many skeletons in Chavez' closet.

¶4. (C) Comment: The BRV appears to be sending Baduel a message that he is also vulnerable to corruption charges and should keep a low profile in the run-up to November state and local elections. Baduel played a crucial role in the December 2007 referendum, but since then has kept a lower profile. He has recently begun to speak out publicly again, which likely prompted the BRV to take action. End Comment.  
CAULFIELD